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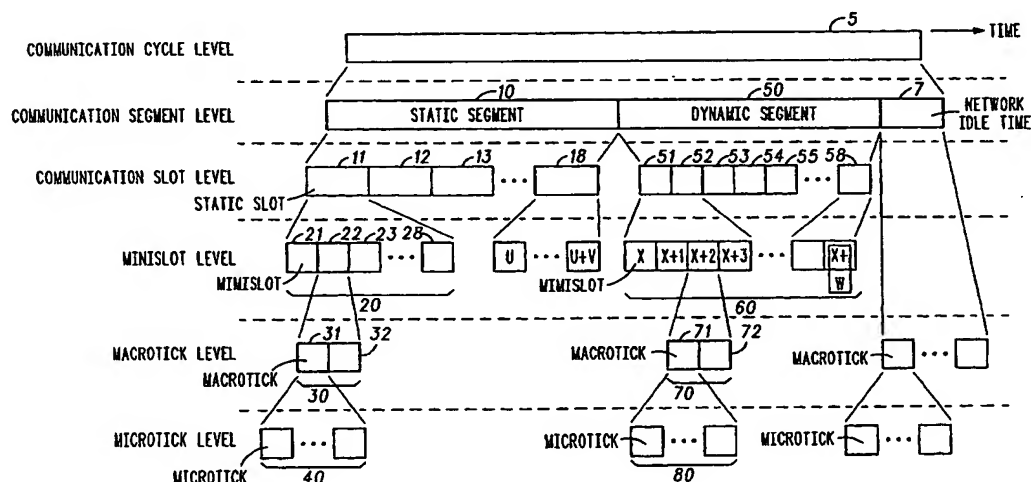
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(54) Title: **SYSTEM NODE AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING MEDIA ARBITRATION**



(57) **Abstract:** A multi-node communications system is provided with communications protocol using both static (11, 12, 13, 18) (pre-determined) and dynamic (51, 52, 53...) (run-time determined) consecutive communication slots is used. The system has a number of distributed communication nodes, each node being arranged for communicating frames of data with the other nodes during both the static (11, 12, 13...) and the dynamic (51, 52, 53...) communication slots. Each node includes a synchronized time base 5 made up of consecutive timeslots (11, 12, 13..., 51, 52, 53...). The timebase 5 has substantially the same error tolerance in each node. For static communication (10), a predetermined number of timeslots (20) are utilized for each static communication slot. For dynamic communication a dynamically allocated number of timeslots (60) are utilized for each dynamic communication slot. In this way both static and dynamic media arbitration is provided within a periodically recurring communication pattern. Communication jitter is well defined and dealt with, and large oscillator drifts are compensated for.